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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, PM, PM/HDP

NSC FOR E. MILLARD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: U.S.-sponsored Quick Reaction Demining Force successfully completes operations in Sri Lanka

Refs: Colombo 1415, and previous

1. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified -- Please handle accordingly.

2. (U) After approximately seven months of operations, the U.S.-sponsored Quick Reaction Demining Force (QRDF) has wrapped up its work in Sri Lanka. On October 24-25, the QRDF turned over two plots of land cleared to international humanitarian demining standards to GSL authorities. (Note: The QRDF-demined land was the first ever cleared in Sri Lanka to humanitarian mine clearance standards.) The land was located in the Sarasalai area of Jaffna near the war-torn town of Chavakachcheri. The final figures for the QRDF demining operation were:

- 122,348 square meters cleared
- 980 anti-personnel mines removed
- 42 pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO) removed

As part of the turnover, the QRDF gave the GSL about USD 15,000 worth of generators, demining explosives, and other items.

(Note: Mission is faxing SA/INS copies of the QRDF's completion records, including a list of the items given to the GSL.)

3. (SBU) The QRDF effort has received widespread acclaim in Sri Lanka. It began its operations in April in response to a specific request made by Prime Minister Wickremesinghe to SA A/S Rocca during her March visit to Jaffna. While performing practical work that is allowing for the safe return of displaced persons to the demined area, the QRDF became a symbol of U.S. support for the peace process, engendering highly positive press coverage for the U.S. in the process. Deputy Secretary Armitage's widely publicized August visit to the QRDF's demining site in Jaffna encapsulated all of these positive threads. The U.S. has reaped these kudos all to itself; despite repeated requests by the GSL, no other country has pitched in to help in actual demining other than the U.S. (Note: The UN demining effort continues to tread water, while a HALO Trust operation is just starting up.) With the QRDF's departure, the next step in U.S. demining assistance is a large-scale DoD-run training program for Sri Lankan military personnel and civilians that is slated to start in early 2003. (Note: Mission has also requested FY-04 funds for additional demining projects.)

4. (U) To commemorate the QRDF and outline next steps in U.S. support, Mission plans to issue a press release along the following lines on October 30:

BEGIN DRAFT TEXT:

U.S. DEMINING GROUP SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES OPERATIONS

The U.S.-sponsored Quick Reaction Demining Force (QRDF) has completed its work in Sri Lanka. On October 24-25, the QRDF turned over two plots of land cleared of mines and explosives to Sri Lankan government authorities. The demined land was the first ever cleared in Sri Lanka to humanitarian mine clearance standards, allowing civilians to return to their land without fear. The cleared land was located in the Sarasalai area of Jaffna near the town of Chavakachcheri. The final figures for the QRDF demining operation were:

- 122,348 square meters cleared to a humanitarian standard
- 980 anti-personnel mines removed
- 42 pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO) removed

As part of the turnover, the QRDF provided about USD 15,000 worth of items to Sri Lankan authorities for use in its demining effort. The U.S. remains fully committed to supporting

humanitarian mine clearance in Sri Lanka, which we see as serving to reinforce the peace process. The next step in U.S. demining assistance is establishment of a humanitarian mine clearance training program for Sri Lankan civilians and military personnel that is scheduled to begin operations in early 2003.

END DRAFT TEXT.

15. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS